



Healthy Communities



Mobilizing Local Communities to Promote Healthier Living

Volume 1, Issue 2 - May 2002

A publication of the Health Departments in Lee, Wise and Scott Counties and the City of Norton

Tales of a Model Community - The Beginning!

Imagine going to your doctor's office one day for a routine check up and being told that you have diabetes. Your doctor tells you that your fast-ing blood sugar is a little high, 175 mg/dl, and normal is between 80 and 120 mg/dl. He also tells you that your blood pressure is 140/87, which is also a little high.

He doesn't want to put you on any medication, yet. He would rather have you adjust your diet and increase your physical activity level to try to bring your blood sugar and blood pressure down. He recommends that you walk thirty minutes a day at least four times a week or more. The nurse schedules an appointment for you for the very next day with a local Certified Diabetes Educator, (CDE) who is also a Registered Dietitian.

Your mind is swirling! Diabetes! High blood pressure! How did this happen? What is a CDE? What does he mean, no medication, yet? Is he talking about insulin? Does that mean I will have to take shots?

You always thought you were a healthy person, rarely getting sick and only about 20 pounds over weight. You've known that you needed to get the 20 pounds off for quite a while now, but exercise just doesn't sound like fun, especially since there doesn't seem to be any

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN VIRGINIA. AN ESTIMATED 20,744 VIRGINIANS DIE EACH YEAR FROM THIS DISEASE.



Tracie Horton, Coordinator for local Cardiovascular Health Project, will be working with coalitions in Lee, Scott and Wise Counties/City of Norton to help develop strategies that will promote healthier communities in the Lenowisco area.

IN SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA, THE DEATH RATE FROM CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE IS 12.5% HIGHER THAN THE STATE AVERAGE. VIRGINIA'S NEW CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH PROJECT WILL ATTEMPT TO CHANGE SOME OF THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE.

LEARN HOW THIS PROGRAM CAN HELP IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF YOUR COMMUNITY AND FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN BECOME INVOLVED. SEE PAGE 3 FOR MORE DETAILS.

one with whom you can exercise.

The next day. You keep your appointment with the CDE. You find out that a CDE is a person who specializes in providing education about how to manage diabetes. She talks to you about carbohydrates, which are the foods that raise your blood sugar. She explains what diabetes is. She tells you that in your case, your body is making insulin but your cells aren't using much of the insulin that your body makes. She explains that exercise helps your cells use the insulin better and even uses up some of the "extra sugar" that is in your blood. She explains that if diabetes isn't controlled, many complications can occur, including heart and kidney disease, amputations, and blindness.

"Whoa!" you think, "I don't want to end up with any of those complications!"

She shows you how and when to monitor your blood sugar each day. She shows you how to put together a daily meal plan that is lower in carbohydrates and portion sizes. Then she helps you develop a menu for the next five days, which includes some of your favorite foods and does not require that you buy those special, expensive diabetic foods. (Oh, good!) She also gives you a list of walking and exercise groups in your area and encourages you to get involved with one. She asks you to return in one week to see how well you are doing.

Tales of a Model Community, cont.

Later that week. You look over the list of walking and exercise groups in your area. You decide to check out one of the walking groups since aerobics doesn't appeal to you. When you arrive there, you discover that you know some of the people who are regular walkers. You find out that the walking group is scheduled at the same time every evening and there is always someone available to walk.

"Mmm," you think. "This might be just the thing that will help me become more active and help me lose some of this weight."



A supportive community can have an impact on the health and quality of life of the residents who live there.

The following week.

You go back to see the CDE and she answers the questions you have about meal planning. She looks at your blood sugar log that you have kept since your last visit and is pleased with many of the readings.

You have a concern about eating out. Most of the restaurants and fast food places with which you are familiar offer foods that are high in fat and calories.

She gives you a list of restaurants in your area that offer heart healthy menus, which are lower in fat, sodium and calories. Some of these restaurants even have smoke free environments.

She also gives you a list of diabetes support groups in your surrounding area, which includes information about a diabetes lay health workers program. This program uses trained

volunteers to help provide education, support and encouragement to people who have diabetes. You can't believe this! You didn't know that your community and the surrounding area offered so many free health-related, health-conscious services!

Four Weeks Later. You go back to your doctor. He tests your fasting blood sugar and informs you that it is within normal limits and so is your blood pressure. He notes that

you have also lost 4 pounds. When he asks you how you have been able to make so many positive changes so quickly, you tell him how

helpful the CDE was. You also tell him about the walking group, the free diabetes education/support programs and the restaurants that offer heart healthy menus. He encourages you to keep up the good work and schedules your next appointment in 3 months. He states that he wishes all of his diabetes and heart patients worked this hard to get their sugar level and blood pressure under control. If they did they would need less medicines and have fewer complications.

Moral of the Story:

- A supportive community can have an impact on the health and quality of life of the residents who live there, and
- Taking personal responsibility is the most effective way to treat and prevent chronic diseases.

Although this is a fictitious story, it is certainly a model of what a healthy community can provide you and others who need and want to improve their health.

See page 3 and 4 to find out how you can help impact the health of your community.

Did you know that people in Virginia who have diabetes compared to those who do not have diabetes are...

- almost 2 times likely to be obese?
- more than 1.5 times as likely to have high cholesterol?
- more than 2.5 times as likely to suffer from hypertension?
- more likely to lead inactive lifestyles?

- *Diabetes in Virginia 2002*

Healthy Community E-News!

The *Healthy Communities* newsletter will be available online in August.



If you would like to receive this quarterly publication by email, please send your email address to cdoerr@vdh.state.va.us.

The Lenowisco Cardiovascular Health Project

- A new Approach to Community Health

The Virginia Cardiovascular Health Project (CVHP) is a new, innovative program that the health departments in Lee, Scott and Wise Counties/City of Norton have been funded to offer their communities. This program will work to reduce the death and complication rates associated with cardiovascular disease and attempt to improve the cardiovascular health of Virginians.

This program emphasizes making healthy lifestyle choices by encouraging environmental and policy changes in a local community.

“What are environmental and policy changes, and what do they have to do with cardiovascular disease?”

In order to answer that question, you will need to ask yourself a few more questions, such as:

- Does your community have facilities for recreation?
- Are the public buildings and retail stores in your community smoke free?
- Do restaurants in your community offer low-fat, heart-healthy menu selections?

- Do these same restaurants offer smoke free environments?
- Can you walk or bicycle safely around your neighborhood?
- Does your work site offer time and facilities that allow employees an opportunity for physical activity throughout the work day?
- Are there healthy snack choices in the vending machines in your area?

These questions are designed to get you thinking about the environmental conditions and policies that are found within your communities. We all know how difficult it can be to change our health-related behaviors. Without support from our community, it is almost impossible to make those changes and stick with them.

Just think about it...

How likely will you be to start the new exercise plan that your doctor recommends if it is difficult to find safe, clean and convenient places to walk or bicycle? How can you stick to your diet if only a few area restaurants offer low fat, heart healthy menus? How can you stop smoking for good, if everywhere you go, you are exposed to other people smoking?

As you can see, communities can develop policies and promote environmental changes that will help provide their residents with the support they need to make health-related changes.

The Lenowisco Health District, which are the Health Departments in Lee, Scott and Wise Counties/City of Norton, is one of only seven health

districts across the state of Virginia selected to implement this exciting new program. To address the unique needs of each county within the Lenowisco Health District, a Coalition for Health will be formed in each county. This will be an exciting opportunity for the citizens of each county and the City of Norton to have a voice in planning strategies that will promote healthier communities.

A County Coalition for Health

Without support from your community, it is almost impossible to make healthy behavior changes and stick with them.



You may be asking yourself another question - “What is a Coalition for Health?” Simply put, it is a group of people who live or work in a particular area who come to-

gether to address the health concerns of that community. The Lenowisco Health District, along with other agencies, organizations and businesses, will be developing a “Coalition for Health” in Wise and Scott Counties and will be joining forces with an already existing coalition in Lee County. These coalitions hope to address diabetes, cardiovascular and tobacco-related health issues in each county.

The Wise County Coalition for Health will be the first coalition to be put in place with a kick off event being held on May 30, 2002 at 6:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn in Norton. See back page of newsletter for more details about this event. Later this summer, kick off events will be held in both Lee and Scott Counties.

If you are interested in becoming in

Cont'd. on back page.

Coalitions for Health, cont.

involved with a local Coalition for Health please contact your local health department.

- In Lee County, call Kay Davis at 276-346-2011.
- In Wise County, call Tracie Horton at 276-328-8000, ext. 116.
- In Scott County, call Cathy Doerr at 276-386-1312.



A Walk a Day, May Keep Heart Disease and Diabetes Away!

If you are interested in starting a walking or biking group in your area, please contact Tracie Horton in Wise County at 276-328-8000, ext. 116 or in Scott County at 276-386-1312. Lee County residents may call Kay Davis at 276-346-2011.

The Wise County Coalition for Health

invites you to attend their

"Looking Back, Moving Forward" Kickoff Event

**Thursday, May 30, 2002
Pine Room
Holiday Inn in Norton
6:30 p.m.**

Program highlights will include:

**A Current Look at Diabetes in our Area,
Past Accomplishments of the
Lenowisco Diabetes Coalition
& Plans for a Healthier Wise County**

**The new Lenowisco Cardiovascular Health Project
will be introduced.**

Light Hors d'oeuvres will be served.

**Please RSVP no later than May 28, 2002
by calling 276-328-8000, ext. 155**

In This Issue...

Tales of a Model Community, Virginia's new Cardiovascular Health Project, Coalitions for Health



**Lenowisco Health District
Wise County/City of Norton Health Dept.
134 Roberts Street, S.W.
Wise, VA 24293
276-328-8000**